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U. S. Says Afghan Rebels Increase Their Control in Northeast Regions

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 10 — The United States reported today that Afghan insurgents had increased their control over the countryside in two northeast provinces of Afghanistan and that heavy fighting between the rebels and Soviet-backed Afghan troops was taking place in and around a key city on the road to Pakistan.

Briefing reporters on the latest intelligence information, Hodding Carter 3d, the State Department spokesman, said that Soviet troops, now estimated at more than 85,000, continue to be reinforced but had not so far engaged in any significant military action with the insurgents.

Despite the freeze in Soviet-American relations following the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, there were signs that diplomatic talks might resume soon.

Administration officials said that Ambassador Thomas J. Watson Jr., who was called home from Moscow last week as a sign of American displeasure, is due to return to the Soviet Union this weekend.

Moscow Envoy Returning

By coincidence, Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin, who returned to Moscow for consultations on Dec. 10, before the Afghan crisis, is expected back in Washington this weekend, officials said.

Meanwhile, officials said that Deputy Secretary of State Warren M. Christopher would probably fly to Brussels next week to confer with Western allies on steps already taken to penalize the Soviet Union for its actions in Afghanistan and to discuss further measures.

In addition, officials said that Richard N. Cooper, Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, planned to visit several allied capitals next week to discuss curbs on exports to Iran and on trade with the Soviet Union.

U.S. Pleased by Response

Today the State Department spokesman issued a statement saying that "the United States is pleased by the positive response on the part of our European allies" to President Carter's decision to cancel the sale of 17 million metric tons of grain to the Soviet Union.

The spokesman said that in addition to the Europeans, Canada and Australia had also promised not to make up the Soviet grain deficit. Argentina has refused to go along with the embargo, but lacks sufficient surpluses to make any difference, the spokesman said. As a result, the spokesman said, "the Soviet Union will be unable through purchases of grain from other countries to meet the major shortfall caused by the President's decision."

"The United States feels that strong allied backing in this area demonstrates Western solidarity in the face of a direct Soviet threat to international security and will make clear to the Soviets that they cannot undertake aggression with impunity," he said.

Heavy Fighting Near Jalalabad

On the fighting in Afghanistan, the spokesman said that "heavy insurgent activity" was occurring around Jalalabad, a key city in eastern Afghanistan that is about 50 miles from the Pakistan border and the Khyber Pass, the gateway into western Pakistan.

"The rebels have hit some targets inside the city and have taken control of at least one outlying district," he said.

The spokesman said that the insurgents, who are not organized under a unified command, had also "increased their control over the countryside in Takhar and Badakhshan provinces in the northeast."

"In these areas," he said, "they seem to be, at least on occasion, penetrating into larger towns. The Soviet-sponsored Afghan Government clearly is concerned about outbreaks of civil unrest in urban areas and has imposed curfews in major cities."